



Flamingo



Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat

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EDITORIAL

It is a pleasure to present combined issue of the second year of our newsletter. Its publication is slightly delayed but we hope that you will relish its content.

In this issue, there are three articles on waterfowl census at Nalsarovar. Besides getting an opportunity of birdwatching, participants involved themselves in a scientific census exercise. Participants should keep on writing about what they saw and counted and should also make a comparisons with what is known about the bird species and their number at Nalsarovar and elsewhere. Over period, this will form a concrete database. We appeal to the Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary Authority to publish detailed census report and make it available to everyone interested. Total bird count as well as count of certain species can be highlighted to promote our site as Ramsar site.

A note on Grey-headed Flycatcher (*Culicicapa*

ceylonensis) by Dishant Parasharya in the last issue provoked Shri Shantilal Varu and Lavkumarsaheb to put up their observations on record. This further provoked B. M. Parasharya and D. N. Rank to do literature survey and collect unpublished records of this species from friends. As a result, with compiled information published in this issue, they have been able to establish its distribution status in Gujarat state. This is an example of positive role of a newsletter like "Flamingo" or "Vihang".

In this issue, we also have a report of Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) sighting near Surat. The record is also substantiated with an excellent colour photograph. This species is certainly an addition to the checklist of the birds of Gujarat State. We congratulate our friends for their keen observations and an excellent photograph. Though marshland birds are difficult to locate, it is important to pay more attention to them.



Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*)

Photo By: Rajesh Jadhav

Water Rail (*Rallus Aquaticus*) Sighted Near Vav, Surat

SIDDHARTH SHAH

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On 1st February 2004, members of BCSS (Birds Conservation Society of Surat) Mr. Debasis Jadia, Mr. Rajesh Jadhav & Mr. Bharat Patel visited Vav village, 25 km from Surat for birding where they found Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) foraging in the marshland in the early morning. This is probably the first authentic record of the species for Gujarat. Fortunately our group member Mr. Rajesh Jadhav could take a record shot.

[According to Ripley (1982), the Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) is a resident species, breeding in Kashmir and Ladakh (?). It is a winter visitor to Pakistan and northwestern India from Kohat to northern Baluchistan, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Bahawalpur, Ambala and Dehra Dun. Has strayed to Sindh and Madhya Pradesh. The Water Rail (*Rallus aquaticus*) has never been recorded in Gujarat State. Punjabi (1997) recorded it near Mumbai, which was considered to be the southern most record of this species. However, recently it is reported from

Sriharikota, Nellore District, Andhra Pradesh by Manakadan and Sivakumar (2004). The current record suggests that the species might be more widely distributed in the Indian Subcontinent than believed. This is a very important report and we appreciate the birdwatcher friends for taking excellent photograph and sharing this valuable information. We need to pay more attention to our marshland birds. - Eds.

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Waterfowl Census at Nalsarovar

NANDITA MUNI

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On 24th and 25th January 2004, Gujarat Forest Department organized Waterfowl Census at Nalsarovar and Thol, in which I was fortunate enough to participate. We (Dr. I. R. Gadhyi, Shri Mohitbhai Andhariya, Shri Harbhadrasinh Sarvaiya, Shri Darshan Andhanya and myself) started for Nalsarovar early in the morning on 24th January. On way to Nalsarovar, we saw usual birds one expects to see on a winter morning. I especially loved seeing White-necked Storks (*Ciconia episcopus*) foraging in fields between Dholera and Nalsarovar. A couple of them took to their wings and gracefully glided parallel to our vehicle for a few beautiful moments! We also saw a big snake lazily basking in the sun near the hedge of a field. Some friends tried to make a better acquaintance of this magnificent animal, but apparently it had other plans for the morning.

When we reached Nalsarovar, the orientation session was just about to start. Shri Udaybhai Vora briefed all the participants about the exercise and then after the lunch, everyone was off to their respective zones. The area was divided into 33 zones; and I along with my partner Ms. Tana Mewada was allotted Zone 27. This zone was more or less

in the very heart of Nalsarovar. This area had two main islands: Panhoti and Kothariya. Also included was area to the west of Kothariya up until Gadhevada and Vanela islands.

There is a well-known saying that journey is no less important than destination. This was certainly true of our boat ride to and from our zone. *En route* we feasted our eyes on the delightful scenery. Reeds being reflected on gently moving surface of the lake and the rich aquatic vegetation underneath reminded of Claude Monet. As if to confirm this observation, here and there lovely white or lavender water lilies would be nodding their assent. We also saw many birds on the way, among which Common Coots (*Fulica atra*) appeared to be the most numerous. Whenever disturbed, their flocks would take to the air in their characteristic fashion, by initial running on the water to gain necessary momentum. For a few moments, not much would be audible but the pattering of their feet and the swish of their wing beats.

On first day's exercise we counted 24 species of birds, and the total number of birds was 503. On the way back, the setting sun had set the lake afire, and the evening sky was

adorned by lines upon lines of Glossy Ibises (*Plegadis falcinellus*) flying to their roosts. Moon, and lovely Venus nestling close by her side, had appeared in the dark night sky by the time we returned. After dinner, there was a campfire and musically gifted participants regaled everyone with songs. It was very tempting to spend the whole night right there around the campfire; but as next morning's work was to start really early, reluctantly everyone called it a day.

Next morning we started for our destination at 5:30 AM. Again, we were treated by the sight of lines upon lines of Glossy Ibises. By the time we reached our zone, the avian world was already going about its business. There were countless Sand Martins (*Riparia riparia*) flitting around each little clump of reeds; and Asian Openbill-Storks (*Anastomus oscitans*) were flying about everywhere, often carrying Apple Snails (*Pyla* sp.) in their bills. Some buffaloes disturbed a distant flock of waders, which we estimated numbered about 3,000. As they were too far to be correctly identified, we contented ourselves with watching their beautiful synchronized flight. On the second day, we counted 26 species of birds. The total number of birds counted was 9690. On our way back, we saw a Pallas's Gull (*Larus ichthyaeus*), easily recognized by its size as well as by the distinctively patterned beak. We were also treated by the sight of a lone Little Gull (*Larus minutus*). On our way back to Bhavnagar, we saw a pair of Sarus Cranes (*Grus antigone*) in a field between Nalsarovar and Dholera.

All in all, this was an experience always to be cherished for me.

1. Little Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax niger*)
2. Little Egret (*Egretta garzetta*)
3. Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)
4. Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*)
5. Large Egret (*Casmerodius albus*)
6. Median Egret (*Mesophoyx intermedia*)
7. Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*)

8. Asian Openbill-Stork (*Anastomus oscitans*)
9. Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)
10. Black Ibis (*Pseudibis papillosa*)
11. Northern Shoveller (*Anas clypeata*)
12. Black-winged Stilt (*Himantopus himantopus*)
13. Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*)
14. Garganey (*Anas querquedula*)
15. Common Teal (*Anas crecca*)
16. Western Marsh-Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*)
17. Pallied Harrier (*Circus macrourus*)*
18. Purple Moorhen (*Porphyrio porphyrio*)
19. Common Coot (*Fulica atra*)
20. Pheasant-tailed Jacana (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*)
21. Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*)
22. White-tailed Lapwing (*Vanellus leucurus*)
23. Red-wattled Lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*)
24. Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*)
25. Common Redshank (*Tringa totanus*)
26. Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*)
27. Grey Wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*)
28. Pallas's Gull (*Larus ichthyaeus*)*
29. Little Gull (*Larus minutus*)*
30. Gull-billed Tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)
31. River Tern (*Sterna aurantia*)
32. White-breasted Kingfisher (*Halcyon smyrnensis*)
33. Sand Martin (*Riparia riparia*)*
34. Common Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)
35. Bank Myna (*Acridotheres ginginianus*)

(* Sign indicates that the species is not recorded in the publication entitled "Environmental Impact Assessment of Sardar Sarovar Project on Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary" prepared by GEER Foundation, Gandhinagar, 1998. -Eds.)

Workshop on Current Status of Vultures in Gujarat

19th September 2004

A one-day workshop will be held on 19th September 2004 at the B. A. College of Agriculture, Anand. The programme will commence at 9:30 hrs. All the members are invited to participate in this workshop which will help to determine current status of vultures in our state and plan out conservation action plan. Those who are unable to attend the workshop are requested to send their data by post/e-mail, so that the same can be incorporated in the status paper. Those who want to attend, should confirm their participation to the Hon. Secretary, BCSG by 11th September 2004.

Waterfowl Census at Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary: Some Important Records

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State Forest Department with the help of volunteer birdwatchers conducted Waterfowl Census at Nalsarovar and Thol Bird Sanctuary on 24th and 25th January 2004. It was a well-organized census effort, much improved with the experience.

We started for Nalsarovar on 24th January in the early morning and looked for the Sarus Crane (*Grus antigone*) between Tarapur and Bagodara. We saw one pair with a juvenile whereas other two pairs were without juvenile. However, between Bagodara and Nalsarovar, our attention was drawn by the birds of prey. We saw Greater Spotted Eagle (*Aquila clanga*) – 4, Short-toed Snake-Eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*) – 1, Steppe Eagle (*Aquila nipalensis*) – 1, Black-shouldered Kite (*Elanus caeruleus*) – 5 and Western Marsh-Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) – 1. We reached little late in the orientation programme, as we made several halts for raptor watching.

Shri N. A. Thakor and myself (BMP) were allotted zone number 16, which covered Dharji Zopali edge up to Zopala bet in the south and up to Babheth bet in the west. Since it was reedy area, we were asked to cover the area by boat also. After lunch, we visited our site but it did not appear to be promising. The only important sighting was of Black-headed Bunting (*Emberiza melanocephala*). About 1000+ birds were perching on *Prosopis cineraria* and *Prosopis juliflora* for night roosting. Some small passerines were also entering in the Typha growth for roosting but could not be identified. At night when we reported about our zone, we hardly had any thing to report about waterbirds.

On next day, 25th morning we reached to our site by jeep much before the sunrise. This gave us an opportunity to see some of the roosting birds leaving the wetland; i.e. Common Crane (*Grus grus*), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), Greylag Goose (*Anser anser*), etc. But most fantastic scene was that of small passerines numbering more than 10,000 flying above the reeds, making a huge cloud. It was clear that the passerines used the reed bed as night roost and they were performing pre-dispersal display.

We spent initial one and half hour moving on the edge and counting birds, which came out of the reeds or those which flew and left the wetland. Till then the species

with significant number were Glossy Ibis (1,157), Comb Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*) (231), Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa*) (183) and Collard Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*) (753). We had very good opportunity to see pratincoles sitting on the ground as well as flying overhead. All of them were Collard Pratincole (*Glareola pratincola*) only and non-was Oriental Pratincole (*Glareola maldivarum*) as expected by the forest department.

After finishing count at the edge, we entered the reedy area by boat; stopped at a few points and counted birds. From Zopali temple we went to Arunathali and Rojaki area and walked in the marshy area. Here we had most rewarding bird count. Some of the striking figures are as follow: Glossy Ibis (2,385), Comb Duck (4,500), Asian Openbill-Stork (*Anastomus oscitans*) (775), White-tailed Lapwing (*Vanellus leucurus*) (27) and Collard Pratincole (2,002).

In fact flocks of ducks and ibises had drawn our attention in the early morning. Since the birds were settling back in the same area, N. A. Thakore and a boatman walked interior to investigate. Due to the disturbances, both the Comb Duck and Glossy Ibis flew overhead which made our counting task easy.

To conclude, we counted more than 12,000 birds of 29 species. But that was not the only significance. Some significant noteworthy records for our area are as follows:

Asian Openbill-Stork- 879; Glossy Ibis – 3,542; Comb Duck – 4,731; Collard Pratincole – 2,755; White-tailed Lapwing – 39.

The Collard Pratincole is considered to be a straggler in winter into India (Ripley, 1982). I could clearly distinguish the species because it breeds around Pariej, Narda and Kanewal reservoirs (Kheda and Anand districts) and moreover, I had examined skins of both the species (*Glareola pratincola* and *G. maldivarum*) at BNHS museum in 1996. Hence, count of 2,755 Collard Pratincoles is a record breaking figure for India. It seems that normally we do not compare the characters but just follow the fieldguide or the checklist provided to us. Comb Duck figures are also surprising and highly significant as its South Asian population is estimated to be 6,000 birds only (Wetland International, 2002). In this reference, significance of Nalsarovar is very high. Glossy Ibis figures were also significant. This was second largest

concentration of Glossy Ibis recorded in India after the first record of 3859 ibises at Lambhvel sewage, Anand by Anika Jadhav (2003).

It was also noteworthy that there was not a single flamingo of either species and only 46 pelicans were counted during the census. For both the species, more ideal habitats were somewhere else where they were busy feeding and breeding.

The waterfowl count figures reported here are the values of only one zone, but it would be more meaningful, if all the participants know total figures of each and every species for entire Nalsarovar. We hope that detailed report of the census of both the sanctuaries will be published and distributed to all those concerned to establish ornithological

significance of Nalsarovar as Ramsar site. If we do not make efforts to highlight our site, it will take long time to draw global attention to this important natural wetland and conservation of its birdlife.

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Waterfowl Census at Thol and Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuaries; 2004

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Following are the brief results of waterfowl census at Thol and Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuaries conducted on 24th and 25th January 2004.

Population estimation of Thol Bird Sanctuary (24/25th January 2004)

S. No.	Group	Number
1	Grebes	2
2	Pelicans	4
3	Cormorants & Darters	830
4	Heron & Egrets	479
5	Storks	83
6	Ibises & Spoonbills	768
7	Geese & Ducks	1,753
8	Cranes	380
9	Rails, Crakes, Gallinules & Coots	21
10	Shorebirds & Waders	13,839
11	Gulls, Terns & Skimmers	199
12	Kingfishers	10
13	Eagles & Harriers	4

Population estimation of Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary (24/25th January 2004)

S. No.	Group	Number
1	Grebes	129
2	Pelicans	46
3	Cormorants & Darters	1,031
4	Heron & Egrets	2,129
5	Storks	3,241
6	Ibises & Spoonbills	8,341
7	Geese & Ducks	82,024
8	Cranes	1,702
9	Rails, Crakes, Gallinules & Coots	58,035
10	Jacanas	407
11	Shorebirds & Waders	23,795
12	Gulls	643
13	Terns & Skimmers	3,610
14	Kingfishers	16
15	Wagtails & Pipits	5,647
16	Eagles & Harriers	235
17	Additional Species	7,063

Newsletter for Ornithologists launched

'Newsletter for Ornithologists' an ornithological newsletter is launched from Hyderabad. Its Emeritus Editor is Zafar Futehally and editor is Aasheesh Pittie. Six issues will be published annually. Subscription for the individual is Rs. 100 (annual) and Rs.300 (three years). DD/ Cheques to be made in favour of "Newsletter for Ornithologists", adding Rs. 25 for outstation cheques and sent to P.O. Box. 2, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad - 500 034.

Status of Grey-headed Flycatcher (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) in Gujarat

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A recent note on sighting of Grey-headed Flycatcher (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) in Ahmedabad (Parasharya, 2003) compelled us to verify the distribution map of this species in recently published fieldguides, compile the published and unpublished information about the sightings of this species to update our knowledge about its status in Gujarat state. The following account with a map should help to establish its status in Gujarat state.

Salim Ali (1955) could collect only two specimens as mentioned above and made a remark that he did not note the species elsewhere in Gujarat, Saurashtra or Kachchh. Probably only these two sightings have been shown on the distribution map by Grimmett *et al.* (1998). Kazmierczak (2000) has slightly improved on the distribution map, but it is largely incomplete. Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) considered the species to be a local migrant to Saurashtra during the winter months but recorded its absence in Kachchh.

Looking to the available records (Table 1 and fig. 1), it is very clear that the species has wide distribution over entire Gujarat state during winter. Moreover, number of published records suggest that its occurrence is also not as rare as it was believed. Monga and Naoroji (1984) had found the species extremely common in Rajpipla forest and speculated its breeding there as the birds were seen there even in the month of June. Friends working in the forests of eastern Gujarat should keep watch on the species to substantiate nesting record in our territory.

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Table 1. Records of Grey-headed Flycatcher in various parts of Gujarat state

S.No.	Place	District	Date	Observer	Reference
1	Mandvi	Kachchh	1948, 1956	M. K. Himmatsinhji	Himmatsinhji, 1958
2	Bhuj	Kachchh	1989 & 1990	S. N. Varu	Varu, 2004
3	Jasdan	Rajkot	?	Lavkumar Khacher	Khacher, 1996; 2004
4	Kileshwar, Barda WS	Porbandar	14 th Dec. 2003	Rajdeep Zala, Bhavesh Trivedi, Rajan Jadav, R. V. Deokar	Zala <i>et al.</i> , 2004
5	Porbandar	Porbandar	2002-2003	Jaidev Dhadhal, Bharat Rughani	Unpublished
6	Gir NP & S	Junagadh	?	R.M. Naik <i>et al.</i>	Anonymous, 1990
7	Gir NP & S	Junagadh	?	Lavkumar Khacher	Khacher, 1996; 2004
8	Gir NP & S	Saurashtra	?	R. S. Dharmakumarsinhji	Dharmakumarsinhji, 1955
9	Hathidhara	Banaskantha	19 th Jan. 1946	Salim Ali	Ali, 1955
10	Polo Forests, Vijaynagar	Sabarkantha	Regular	B. N. Trivedi	Unpublished
11	Indroda Park, Ayurvedic Garden	Gandhinagar	Regular	Uday Vora	Unpublished
12	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	Jan. 2002, Dec. 2003	B. N. Trivedi	Unpublished
13	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	20 th Nov. 2003	Dishant Parasharya & Dishith Mehta	Parasharya, 2003
14	Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad	?	Lavkumar Khacher	Khacher, 1996; 2004
15	Jambughoda WS	Panchmahal	Dec. 1999	B. M. Parasharya	Unpublished
16	Ratanmahal WS	Dahod	1999-2001	Pranav Trivedi & Ketan Tatu	Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2002
17	Ratanmahal WS	Dahod	20 th Feb. 2000	B. M. Parasharya	Unpublished
18	Anand	Anand	Dec. 1988	B. M. Parasharya	Unpublished
19	Khambhat	Anand	6 th Dec. 1945	Salim Ali	Ali, 1955
20	Shoolpaneshwar WS	Narmada	Dec. 1989-1992	Isha Desai	Desai <i>et al.</i> , 1993
21	Shoolpaneshwar WS	Narmada	1990-1997	D. S. Narve, C. D. Patel, N. P. Pandya	Narve <i>et al.</i> , 1997
22	Shoolpaneshwar WS	Narmada	?	S. A. Chavan	Chavan, 1998
23	Sagai (Shoolpaneshwar WS)	Narmada	11 th -12 th Sept. 2002	B. M. Parasharya	Unpublished
24	Sagai (Shoolpaneshwar WS)	Narmada	8 th -12 th Feb. 2002	Yagnesh Bhatt	Bhatt, 2003
25	Juna Rajpipla, Namgir (Shoolpaneshwar WS)	Narmada	Jan., June, Dec. 1982; Dec. 1983	S. G. Monga & Rishad Naoroji	Monga & Naoroji, 1984.
26	Mandvi	Surat	3 rd Jan. 2003	Mukesh Bhatt	Bhatt, 2004
27	Vansda NP	Navsari	1998-2000	Ketan Tatu	Singh <i>et al.</i> , 2000
28	Mahal (Purna WS)	Dang	27 th /30 th Oct. 2003	Volunteers of BCSG & Nature Club, Surat	Joshi <i>et al.</i> , 2003.
29	Mahal (Purna WS)	Dang	6 th Nov. 2002	Shyama Shodhan, Chaula Patel, Narendra Shodhan	Shodhan <i>et al.</i> , 2003
30	Mahal (Purna WS)	Dang	3 rd Nov. 2000	Mukesh Bhatt	Bhatt, 2001

NP = National Park, WS = Wildlife Sanctuary, S = Sanctuary

Fig. 1. Records of Grey-headed Flycatcher in various parts of Gujarat state (for numbers refer Table 1)



First Record of Brown Wood Owl (*Strix leptogrammica*) from Gujarat: A Clarification

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Nocturnal birds of prey - the owls are widespread and known as controllers of rodents. 11 owl species have been recorded from Gujarat (Ali, 1954-55; Khacher, 1996), with one more potential species in question mark i.e. the Forest Owlet (*Heteroglaux blewetti*). The distribution of most species however is not well documented in the state.

I sighted Brown Wood Owl (*Strix leptogrammica*) - a new species for the state on three occasions during the study of avifauna of Purna Wildlife Sanctuary (PWS), Dangs district. The three sightings (twice a pair and once a single individual) were obtained in Duldha locality in Bardipada Range of PWS between January to April 2002. It was sighted in dense bamboo brakes of *Bambusa arundinacea*, interspersed with mixed moist deciduous and teak forest. On one occasion, in March 2003 during the nocturnal bird survey; I also suspect having heard its call in Borumal area of PWS. I reported the sightings in my report to GEER Foundation (Trivedi, 2003, p. 20). This apparently was the first record of the species in Gujarat.

I am writing this note on reading three pieces in *Flamingo* Vol. 1, No. 5 & 6 (editorial, Mashru A. & Joshi A.) mentioning their sighting as the first record of Brown Wood Owl from Gujarat. The reported sighting occurred in Octo-

ber 2003, much later compared to my sighting (January-April 2002) and its subsequent reporting (April 2003). Therefore, sightings made by me in early 2002 should be treated as first record and the latter (i.e. those in *Flamingo*) as confirmation of the same.

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Luna Heronry in Kachchh

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This has reference to an article on 'Nesting of Glossy Ibis at Luna, Kachchh' by Ashwin Pomal in *Flamingo* Vol.1 No. 5 & 6, 2003.

His mention about breeding of Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*) at Ningal Tank is not correct. Such a note is not published in 'Flamingo' (Vol. 1 No. 3&4) as mentioned by him. This year nesting colony of Painted Storks (*Mycteria leucocephala*) was seen at Ningal Tank. Actually Glossy ibis colony at Luna was discovered by Mr. J. K. Tiwari in the year 1992 and not by me (*We regret for the error- Eds.*). I visited this place on 7th August 1994 with Mr. Tiwari and saw heronry including nesting of Glossy Ibis. Thereafter, Mr. Tiwari and I saw 5 nests with 6 young birds at Pathapir dam near Baranda in Abdasa taluka on 28th September 1999.

In the year 2003, single nest with one young bird was seen at a check dam near Vazira Vandh on 31st August. There can be more nests but it could not be verified because the nests were located in the interior part of *Prosopis juliflora* growth. My visit to Luna Jheel with friends on 21st September, 2003 was not in vain. It was an exiting and interesting experience. Though we could not reach near the colony due to excessive water depth but heard voice of chicks and saw movement of waterbirds going for feeding and bringing nesting material. 25-30

Glossy Ibis were seen bringing food and some birds carrying nesting material in their beak. 3-4 Purple Herons (*Ardea purpurea*), 6-7 Eurasian Spoonbills (*Platalea leucorodea*), 3 Darters (*Anhinga melanogaster*), 8-10 Little Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax niger*), 10-12 Oriental White Ibises (*Threskiornis melanocephalus*), 25-30 Cattle Egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*), 4-5 Median Egrets (*Mesophoyx intermedia*) and 6-7 Black-crowned Night-Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) were seen busy in above activity. Thus, this heronry was active with other waterbirds also.

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A Red Alert: Birds' Trade

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Recently I came to know about illegal trade of various bird species being carried out in some of the areas of Ahmedabad like Victoria Garden, Delhi Chakla, Gomtipur etc., especially in Sunday-market 'Ravivari'. Individuals of certain communities stand somewhere in the corner with empty cages in their hands as an indication of a 'bird business'. They attract persons interested in buying birds by murmuring strange codes like birdcalls, twittering, fluffing and fluttering sounds. If any person approaches, first they confirm their identity and profession. After confirming that the purchaser is not from the forest department or from any bird rescuing team, they take them to some distant huts, where caged birds are already kept. They show both indigenous as well as exotic bird species and fix up the rate after hard bargaining. An average price for an individual bird species varies from Rs. 200 to 300 for young one and Rs.

500 to 800 for an adult bird, depending upon its origin, type, availability, demand and market values.

Some of the bird species they deal with are munias, lorikeets, parakeets, parrots, macaw, owls, falcons etc. In addition to this, Alexandrine Parakeets are also sold here. Formal talk with traders revealed that they catch resident species from forest area while exotic species are brought here with the help of a strong network of persons engaged in such trade. As an adult bird is very difficult to trap, they prefer to catch young ones, and rear them for sale at a proper time.

All bird-lovers and NGOs working for the cause of conservation, should work together to prevent bird trade. Bird trade should not become a cause of extinction of our birds. Let's make some joint efforts to prevent the illegal trade of the birds.

Bar-headed Goose at Mahisagar River, Vasad

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A morning trek from Umeta to Vasad along the bank of Mahisagar river was organized by Nature Club of Veterinary College, Anand on 21st March 2004. Water was just released from the dam hence, the river had enough water flowing. At about 11:00 hrs we saw 4 Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*) at just 50 feet distance near shore, approx. one km away from Mahisagar temple. As the volunteers approached near they took short flight and settled in the midst of flowing river. Bar-headed Geese are not reported in this area earlier (B. M. Parasharya, pers. com.). Shree Lalsinh Raol (*Vihang* 21: 30, 2004) has mentioned about the changing distribution pattern of this species. It was considered to be a rare winter visitor to Gujarat (Ali, 1955). Grimmett *et al.* (1998) have not shown its distribution in central and south Gujarat however, Kazmierczak (2000) has shown its distribution over entire Gujarat, except Kachchh and eastern border of the state. In recent past, there are several reports of its sightings from Saurashtra as well as north Gujarat and Kachchh (Gadhavi and Zala, 2000; Thakker, 2001; Varu, 2003). Except two recent sightings at Ambali dam near Mandavi, Surat (Bhatt, 2001, 2004), there are no records of its occurrence, from central and south Gujarat. I had an unconfirmed report of Bar-headed Geese occurring on Dev dam in Panchmahal district. Hence current report is a bridging observation establishing that the species now occurs all over Gujarat state

The other important sightings were the presence of hundreds of Citrine (*Motacilla citreola*), Yellow (*Motacilla flava*) and Grey Wagtails (*Motacilla cinerea*). White Wagtails (*Motacilla alba*) and Large Pied Wagtails (*M. maderaspatensis*) were also present but in small number. Presence of large number of other waterbirds also made the trek enjoyable.

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BIRDING NOTES

Nesting of River Terns (*Sterna aurantia*) at Nyari -I, Rajkot

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Around 1500 River Terns (*Sterna aurantia*) were estimated, some of them were sitting on the islands and showing breeding behaviour. There might be about 700 nests; however I could not count, as they were far off on 3 different islands. Some chicks were crawling on the island. I visited the site again on 22nd February 2004. I saw at least 1000 River Terns flying with their young ones and a few adults still sitting on the islands (presumably incubating). Some birds were engaged in mating activity also. Nesting activity had started in mid October 2003 hence there are chances of repeated clutches. Dr. Taej Mundkur had done extensive study of

River Terns nesting at Nyari-I dam during 1985 to 1990. I had a chance to ring the chicks of River Tern and Eurasian Spoonbill with him. We used to approach island by boat. At that time about 100 nests were there on a small island.

In other dams around Rajkot city, there were large numbers of ducks in January as there was good amount of water compared to the last year. There were 2500 Common Teals (*Anas crecca*) at Lalpari and 1500 Common Coots (*Fulica atra*) at Sat Hanuman. We also sighted 3 Eurasian Griffons (*Gyps fulvus*) there.

Heronry at Nyari -I, Rajkot

ASHOK MASHRU

A-7, Alap Heritage, Kalawad Road, Rajkot-360 005

I visited heronry at Nyari-I dam on 10th January 2004. The water level of the dam had depleted considerably. Ganda Baval (*Prosopis juliflora*) patch on the margin of the reservoir had almost dried up and also become thinner hence, a clear view of the heronry was possible. Nest records were as follows:

Little Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax niger*) -127 nests; Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*) -14 nests; Grey Heron (*Ardea cinerea*)-1 nest with one chick; Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*) -1 nest with two chicks (not in the heronry but little away). Nesting of Grey Heron and Purple Heron are the first records around Rajkot city.

Sighting of Indian Plaintive Cuckoo

JIGNESH JOSHI

"Padmadhara", Behind Desaiwadi, Mograwadi, Valsad-396 001.

On 22nd April 2004 in hot hours I was on the terrace of my house, lying under the shade of a beautiful Peepal tree. Suddenly I heard a strong and cheerful call of a bird, which I had never heard before. Through my binoculars, I located a small cuckoo-like grey bird hiding within the foliage. Its breast was grey without bars while the tail was barred. After referring bird book, I recognized it as a male Indian Plaintive Cuckoo (*Cacomantis passerinus*). My friend Mohammed Jat also confirmed identity of this bird.

(According to Ali and Ripley (1983) this species

occurs at Mount Abu and eastern Gujarat, but not recorded elsewhere in Gujarat. The distribution map of the species given in the recent books by Grimmett et al. (1998) and Kazmierczak (2000) show its distribution on the eastern fringe of our state. The species is even not recorded in the biodiversity study of Ratanmahal Wildlife Sanctuary and Vansda National Park carried out by GEER Foundation. Hence it is worth recording. Readers are requested to send their records of this species to determine its exact distribution status. -Eds.)

Birding at Khirasara Vidi and Nyari Dam, Rajkot

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In early morning on 14th March 2004, we headed for 'Khirasara Vidi', 22 km from Rajkot. Birds such as Eurasian Eagle-Owl (*Bubo bubo*) (2), Red-headed Falcon (*Falco chicquera*), Pallid Harrier (*Circus macrourus*), Bonelli's Eagle (*Hieraetus fasciatus*), Painted Francolin (*Francolinus pictus*), Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse (*Pterocles exustus*) etc. were notable species in the Vidi.

On the way back from Khirasara Vidi to Nyari dam, adjacent to the road a very large flock of Comb Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotos*) along with Demoiselle Crane (*Grus virgo*) was seen flying over a field. Gradually it settled in the field. Both the species started feeding on the wheat grains left out on the ground after harvesting. The Comb Ducks were around 250 in numbers while the number of Demoiselle Cranes was nearly 300. This was probably first time that that Demoiselle Cranes were seen around Rajkot

in this winter. Seven Common Cranes were also present. In the same field we saw a Jungle Cat (female) with two kittens.

After spending a fair time in the field, we reached to Nyari dam. 11 Darters (*Anhinga melanogaster*) were flying over us in a circular fashion. We also saw 2 adult and 2 juvenile Purple Herons (*Ardea purpurea*) perching on the branches of 'Ganda Baval' (*Prosopis juliflora*) near the nest. The 'Ganda Baval' was half submerged in water. Other birds seen in and around the dam were Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*), Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*), Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), Cotton Teal (*Nettapus coromendelianus*), Great Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Western Marsh-Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) etc. During this winter, numbers of River Terns (*Sterna aurantia*) and Little Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax niger*) were quite high as compared to the last two years.

Status of Grey-headed Flycatcher in Kachchh

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As per "Birds of Kutch" by Salim Ali (1945), Grey-headed Flycatcher (*Culicicapa ceylonensis*) is not recorded in Kachchh. But Shri M. K. Himmatsinhji (1958) has recorded this bird at Vijay Vilas, Mandvi in month of January 1948 (glimpse of bird) and on 24th December 1956 (3 or 4 birds). Thereafter I saw a single bird at Wadi of Shri Himmatsinhji at Bhuj on 28th November 1989. As intimated to me by

Himmatsinhji, this bird again visited this Wadi on 9th November 1990 and stayed around up to 12th December 1990. Only single bird was seen. Thus this is worth recording.

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A White Little Grebe at Muval

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As a part of our Asian Waterfowl Census 2004, we were at Muval Village tank on 15th January 2004, where we sighted a white Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*); one of the rare sightings. This was confirmed by Dr. Geeta

Padate who was with us. Other team members include Tana Mewada, Sonal Deshkar and Jagruti Rathod. The same bird was sighted again at Muval by several other birdwatchers of Vadodara on 26th January 2004.

Birding at Pariej and Kavi

MOHAMMED U. JAT

3, Anand Colony, Poultry Farm Road, First Gate, Atul - 396 020

It was a nice experience during Waterfowl Census (24 & 25 January 2004) at Nalsarovar. After overnight stay at Tarapur (Anand District) we went early in the morning to Pariej reservoir. We saw a solitary Great Crested Grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*) there. There were also Common Coot (*Fulica atra*), Common Pochard (*Aythya ferina*), Northern Shoveller (*Anas clypeata*), Spot-billed Duck (*Anas poecilorhyncha*), Little Grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), Gadwall (*Anas strepera*), Northern Pintail (*Anas acuta*), Lesser Pied Kingfisher (*Ceryle rudis*) (2), Western Marsh Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*) (5), Osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) (2), Brahminy Shelduck (*Tadorna ferruginea*),

etc.

Thereafter we went to Kavi-Kamboi, 26 km far from Jambusar, near Stambheshwar Temple. We observed 25,000 Lesser Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus minor*) on the opposite side of the Gulf, near Khambhat. We also saw 64 Greylag Geese (*Anser anser*), 5 Great White Pelicans (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*) including one juvenile. We also observed Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*), Little Ringed Plover (*Charadrius dubius*), Kentish Plover (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), Common Greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*) etc.

Houbara in Wild Ass Sanctuary

NANDITA MUNI

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My trip to the Little Rann of Kachchh for Wild Ass Census (31 January- 1 February, 2004) was very exiting one, as it was my first trip to the Little Rann. We (Dr. Indra Gadhvi, Sh. H. I. Sarvaiya) were asked to count Houbara (*Chlamydotis undulata*). We saw about a hundred different species of birds in two days, including

six Houbaras (at Pung Bet, Odu-ni-dhassi) -a lifebird for me- and three Sarus Cranes (*Grus antigone*) near Narali. We also saw various waterfowls at the Tundi wetland near Bajana. Also saw two Indian White-backed Vultures (*Gyps bengalensis*) over there. Of course, we saw about 200 Wild Asses too. All in all, it was a weekend in heaven!

A Trip to Vansda National Park in Summer

JIGNESH JOSHI¹ AND MOHAMMED JAT²

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Every year we visit the Vansda National Park in winter, but this time we decided to go for bird watching in summer. We visited the park on 8th April 2004. A group of Jungle Babblers (*Turdoides striatus*) welcomed us. Loud call of Brown-headed Barbet (*Megalaima zeylanica*) was heard everywhere!! Small nala is the all time favorite place of White-rumped Shama (*Copsychus malabaricus*). We saw three of them (race: *c. m. malabaricus*). After passing "talavdi" we saw a female Lesser Golden-backed Woodpecker (*Dinopium benghalense*). Suddenly a flash of red colour occurred in the bamboo canopy. It was a beautiful male Malabar Trogon (*Harpactes fasciatus*). Later we found two females with it. In Bharadi area we observed Tickell's Blue-Flycatcher (*Cyornis tickelliae*),

Black-napped Monarch-Flycatcher (*Hypothymis azurea*), Common Tailorbird (*Orthotomus sutorius*), Indian Treepie (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*), Greater Racket-tailed Drongo (*Dicrurus paradiseus*), White-bellied Drongo (*Dicrurus caerulescens*) and Asian Paradise-Flycatcher (*Terpsiphone paradisi*). We heard a call of Indian Cuckoo (*Cuculus micropterus*) from a distance. It was getting hot so we decided to take rest near watchtower No. 2. A small group of Gold-fronted Chloropsis (*Chloropsis aurifrons*) was up on a "Mahuda" tree. We could smell fragrance of its flowers everywhere. A small group of Indian Scimitar-Babblers (*Pomatorhinus horsfieldii*) was crawling around us. We really enjoyed summer birding and returned to Valsad in the evening.

STOP PRESS

Flamingos at Bhavnagar: During the summer count of flamingo on 22nd May 2004 in Bhavnagar District, we were stunned by a large number of flamingos especially at three sites, Kumbharwada (Lesser Flamingo -16,000 out of which 2,500 were Juveniles), New Port salt pans and

seacoast (Lesser Flamingo -45,775, Greater Flamingo -16,062), Nirma Salt pans (Lesser Flamingo -11,839, Greater Flamingo -15,975). It is almost 2-3 times more than the average regular count. Reason of this concentration is not known.- **Vikas M. Trivedi and Viral Vaghela**, Bhavnagar.

SOME IMPORTANT SIGHTINGS

- **White-backed Vulture** (*Gyps benghalensis*) on 13th March 2004: One bird on a tree about 3 km from Jambughoda on Bodeli road. Two birds in flight close to Sagthala village on Tejgadhi-Devgadhi baria road. **Snehal Patel**, Anand.
- **Black-capped Kingfisher** (*Halecyon pileata*) at Panvad Bet, Nalsarovar since 18th February 2004. **Kasam Sama**, Nalsarovar.

- **Houbara** (*Chlamydotis undulata*) three birds near Mithapur in January 2004. **Satish Trivedi**, Mithapur.
- **Mallard** (*Anas platyrhynchos*) 2 males and 2 females at Khodiyar dam, near Dhari on 20th February 2004.
- Black Stork** (*Ciconia nigra*) 16 birds a week before at the same site. **Ajit Bhatt**, Dhari.

BCSG NEWS

BCSG Newsgroup Started: Recently, a BCSG newsgroup has started. Members who have access to internet may join this newsgroup and communicate with other members for quick exchange of information. Please send your mail to BiCoSoGuj@yahoogroups.co.in

Or to Shailesh Master, Surat: masterseles@yahoo.co.in

Appeal for Notes by e-mail: All readers who have internet access are requested to send their observations/ notes for publication in "Flamingo" through e-mail. This will certainly reduce our efforts of typing and composing the matter.

Moreover, querrier if any, it can be solved immediately. We would also appreciate a typed written manuscript rather than a hand written one. Illegible handwriting may create new confusion. Hence all are requested to help the editors.

Appeal For Subscription Renewal: Many memberships have become due for renewal. We are enclosing membership forms with "Flamingo" and hope that you will renew your membership in time. If you have already renewed your membership, please ignore this reminder.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON BIRDS OF GUJARAT

1. Jadhav, A. and B. M. Parasharya 2004. Population count of the flamingos at some selected sites of Gujarat state, India. *Waterbirds* 27(2): 141-146.
2. Khacher, L. 2003. Sarus Crane: An emblem of failure of India's conservation movement? *J. Ecological Society* 16: 47-48.
3. Lad, P. M. 2003. Will history repeat itself in flamingo city? *Hornbill* October-December 2003:26.
4. Tiwari, J. K. 2003. The pink city of Gujarat. *Hornbill* October-December 2003:22-24.
5. Aeshita Mukherjee, C. K. Borad and B. M. Parasharya 2002. A study of the ecological requirements of waterfowl at man-made reservoirs in Kheda district, Gujarat, India with a view towards conservation, management and planning. *Zoos' Print J.* 17(5): 775-785.
6. Borad, C. K., Aeshita Mukherjee, S. B. Patel and B. M. Parasharya 2002. Breeding performance of Indian Sarus Crane *Grus antigone antigone* in the paddy crop agroecosystem. *Biodiversity and Conservation* 11:795-805.
7. Mukherjee, Aeshita, C. K. Borad and B. M. Parasharya 2002. Breeding performance of the Indian Sarus Crane in the agricultural landscape of western India. *Biological Conservation* 105(2): 263-269.
8. Parasharya B. M. 2002. Standardized bird names: who will use them? *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* 42 (5): 101.

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

➤ Just received Vol. 1, No. 5 and 6 2003. My immediate impressions -a very qualitative improvement in layout and in editing though the latter will require a continual endeavor. Also during 2004, do ensure that the numbers come out regularly. I would urge you to start publishing your papers in "Flamingo". While the rather long editorial may be excused this one time do ensure that it does not dominate the issues. In this issue however, you had raised very pertinent points and I must congratulate you.

The Grey-headed Flycatcher while possibly being restricted of late is a regular winter visitor to places with tall shady trees specially with water nearby. I have seen it at Jasdan in the former gardens/orchards and would be surprised if a few birds do not continue visiting Asgarbhai's "God's Acre". Several individuals used to be seen by me regularly at "Sundarvan" in Ahmedabad. The cheery call is a give away which once linked with the lively little flycatcher can be a useful indicator of its presence.

For your record, Black-capped Kingfishers have been seen on several occasions by me on the overflows of the Khijadiya Bird Sanctuary, Jamnagar. They appeared to be making the most of the fresh water on one side and saline tidal water on the other. You are right; we have not kept regular notes.

Now that I am stirring my memories I recollect being

surprised at the Golden Oriole not being recorded as breeding bird for Gujarat because invariably on my way to the Himalayas during summer, the long wait for the connecting train at Mehsana was relieved of boredom by the liquid calls emanating from the large trees outside the railway yard where our bogey would be shunted. I also remember hearing the Large Green Barbet. What has become of this species? -Lavkumar Khacher, Rajkot.

➤ Many thanks for the "Flamingo" that arrived yesterday. I am very pleased to learn about the establishment of the Bird Conservation Society of Gujarat and to read this issue. Congratulations on Bakulbhai's and your efforts and those of the other executive members. It is so very important to produce newsletters and disseminate information regularly and by its format and content, I am sure this will become a very popular medium of communication.

I recollect reading in JBNHS that there were records of the Black-capped Kingfisher in Pakistan as well. But it would appear that Gujarat-Pakistan is probably the western limit of the range of this species. I remember seeing it many a time at Khijadia. The increase in Black-necked Grebes is just amazing. I would certainly like to continue receiving this, especially once I return to India. -Dr. Taej Mundkur, Malaysia

I thank you for sending issues of Vol.1 of 2003. I have read them critically. Now that you have decided to serve the cause of ornithology in this state, you will have to observe strict norms in this regard. After all you would be dealing with a subject which is very much scientific in all its aspects and so there will have to be absolute accuracy of observations and reporting. It is only then that you would measure up to international standards.

Having set forth the above preliminary remarks I shall correct the impression of Ashok Mashru regarding what appeared to him 'strange' in the feeding behaviour of the White Pelican. I am sorry. I inadvertently corroborated his impression. In actual fact it was the well-known feeding behaviour of the species in shallow water. In this case there were only two birds involved, however when they are in a larger group, it is great fun watching them driving a shoal of

fish with bill open, wings extended towards shallower water and the fun begins when the fish turn around to escape back into deeper water. This is when these grotesque birds excitedly gobble up the fish entering into their open bills with much wing flapping and bills snapping with body action similar to, but not exactly the same, upending pintails.

And lastly, I must mention here that it was a great matter of pride and pleasure for those of us from this part of the country who were present that evening last November in Mumbai to witness the award being given to our President, Lavkumar Khacher. I do not have words to describe my own feelings at his receiving the award of Excellence in Ornithology along with scientist like Dr. George Schaller, T. J. Roberts and others. We must take full advantage of his deep knowledge and experience that he has gained over the years. - **M. K. Himmatsinhji, Bhuj.**

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Bird watching, like so much in life, should be enjoyed. Far too many of us appear to be going around with some "chip on our shoulders". True, a scientist doing some research on birds – now a day there are "ornithologists", research students and research scientists in growing numbers, – may feel he or she is more qualified. Seminars and workshops funded by government or international funding agencies are being organized with greater frequencies and these tend to instill seriousness in what earlier was essentially a lighthearted pass time. Being seen at these "jamborees" and specially being invited to give "Key Note" addresses or serve as a "pundit" adds to one's prestige. I for one find much of this quite amusing because we Indians have yet to instill lightness in serious matters even as greater methodology in the pursuit of a relaxing hobby is necessary. More often as not, with the general degradation of habitats all around and growing pressures on the notified Sanctuaries and National Parks, their effective management is cause for much concern and during such gatherings, concerns get voiced, which are seen as criticism by the wildlife managers. Whereas, earlier the government tended to disregard public opinion of amateurs, today, government representatives expect to be invited – as indeed they should – and there often is a palpable atmosphere of confrontation. The organizers, more often than not, are compelled to play balancing role. A good deal of the acrimony spill over beyond the four walls of the gathering venue warping what should be a sharing of the sheer joy of being out in the country and enjoying the exuberance of the avian population.

Puzzling out the identities of the larks, pipits, warblers or waders, all add a flavoring of seriousness to the essential pleasure. Keeping careful notes improve ones capacity just as writing a letter is much more involving than making a phone call to express ones affection!

The purpose of my spending so much time on the previous paragraph is to draw attention to something we all should beware of because such gathering are extremely in keeping with the times and there must be frank exchange of ideas, concerns and criticisms. They can help to mould public opinion, but above all, develop an understanding between what I see as a triangular grouping – the amateur birdwatchers, the scientists and the managers. If the triangle could become a circle, it would be appreciated that we all are concerned about the same problems and indeed can strengthen one another. Criticisms have to be aired and listened to; problem solutions worked out and the difficulties in enforcing regulations explained and appreciated. My most enjoyable moments were spent discussing research possibilities with the late Dr. Ramesh Naik who was the then Head of the Bioscience Department, Saurashtra University – on the one hand and outlining proposals for the notification of the Gulf of Kachchh Marine Sanctuary and National Park with M. A. Rashid, IFS the then Chief Wildlife Warden, Gujarat State.

Very sensitively drawn up concepts have to be outlined and initiated with great imagination if we want to bring about any positive changes in the current trends. Entire ecosystems have to be carefully managed if there are to be any significant conservation successes. The human induced pressures have assumed Himalayan proportions and

all of us interested in our birds and their habitats have got to close ranks and work in a synchronized manner. Himmatsinhji, Shivbhadrasinhji, Ranjitsinhji and myself have considerable experience to pass on. All four of us will agree that it is easier to get sanctuaries notified but it is after the formalities have been completed that the real task becomes difficult, since very few of the enthusiasts give much thought to a powerful, all pervasive forth lobby, the general public. We have singularly failed in building conservation programme on the traditional sentiments of the general public. While the larger mammals do need areas set aside for their specific use, birds are best provided for within the human environment. I therefore, have realized the great role we can play in evolving popular awareness and towards that, not only should our messages be clear and unambiguous, but the joys of bird watching should be apparent so that more and more people get involved. The illustrated field guides, the excellent binoculars and telescopes now available and affordable, along with the fine photographic equipments one sees people carrying around all add up to making a morning's outing as enjoyable as in the days of partridge beats and duck shoots. We are, indeed, on the threshold of a renaissance of field sport where the trophies are the photographs, the quarry continuing to live on for another occasion's sport!

We just do not have to go around with poker faces rolling up checklists and looking for Red Data Book species. We should enjoy the opportunity to be out in the country, in clear air and with congenial society. Fortunately, for those who can not go far, birds can be induced to come to gardens and around homes. Suitable trees, shrubs and climbers, the provision of water and food and putting up nest boxes can make a suburban garden a vibrant bird sanctuary. Experience should not only make one aware of a birds'

"jizz", we should also become aware of its specific preferences. For instance, to have the Grey-headed Flycatcher, the Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, the White-browed Fantail-Flycatcher and the Spotted Fantail Flycatcher all happily living in an acre of garden, tall dense foliated trees, tangled under growth, a moist spot with dripping water and a *sandappled patio* would all be required. By carefully observing each species preference the concept of niche would become clear – several closely related species living together each in its preferred location or niche prevent competition yet optimize use of an area. This understanding is essential when management of wilderness areas is brought into perview specially so when areas are small and are being set aside for some particular, highly threatened species. Developing fine tuned understandings is what makes an average bird watcher into a respected ornithologist.

To conclude this section, dear friends, let us remove chips off our shoulders and share our observations, pleasures and problems. Let us remember it is not something to rejoice about seeing a vagrant into our area, rather the plentitude of our common species that should delight us. As I jokingly told an enthusiastic young acolyte, the day you see a penguin waddle up our beach, be sure there is a great disaster in the offing. I would rather have River Terns nesting on the reservoirs, around Rajkot than get all excited at seeing an Arctic Tern there. Even as we make additions to Gujarat's checklist, are we maintaining a tally of those that have dropped off it? You will understand why I am least excited about proving the existence of the Kashmere Flycatcher in the Dangs yet a really concerned at the absence of the formerly plentiful species.

(Errata: Please refer the last issue, page 12: please read "jizz" and not "fizz". We regret for the misprint -Eds.)

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Flamingo



Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat

Vol.1, No. 3 & 4 : 2003

EDITORIAL

In the last issue of our newsletter, we had drawn attention towards illegal trading of owls by the people believing in black magic or 'superstitions'. The first report of seizing of 9 owls from an 'Ashram' near Nadiad appeared in the newspaper in April 2003. Then started a series of such reports from different parts of the state. Media gave proper coverage to such seizing and helped to bring awareness amongst laymen. Several individuals and NGOs played an important role in seizing of illegally captivated owls.

From several reports we learned that Great Horned Owl *Bubo hubo*, Mottled Wood Owl *Strix ocellata*, Brown Fish Owl *Ketupa zeylonensis* and Barn Owl *Tyto alba* were the victims and seized. Besides capturing these species from our forests, the traders had brought some birds from south India too. This is alarming information as prevailing superstitions at one place may take toll of birds in other region also. It is very important that superstitions are broken and black magicians are exposed immediately. We require to take following steps: 1. Discourage people believing in superstitions/ black magic 2. Bring awareness amongst laymen about the superstitions and black magic requiring sacrifices of innocent birds. This can be done by writing popular articles in local daily and fixing posters at public place. 3. Help forest officials to prevent bird trade. 4. The officer seizing birds should know correct identity of the species and each species should be released back in their proper habitat.

The owls are farmer's friends as they are the only check on the population explosion of rodents and some nocturnal insect pests. Unfortunately, the owls and some birds of prey also become victim of secondary poisoning by rodenticides. If the rodents killed by rodenticides are not buried properly, they are consumed by the owls and a chain of secondary poisoning starts, leading to population crash. Hence there is a need for sensible dealing with our nocturnal friends.

First meeting of the expanded executive committee of our society was held in August. We decide to start some field programmes for the members. Under this, a field camp was arranged at Dang during 27-30 October with help of Surat nature Club. Harrier count is proposed at Velavadar National Park in collaboration with state forest department on 22 November.

Though publication of this issue of 'Flamingo' is delayed, we have decided to publish it more regularly. At least 6 issues will be published annually. All the members are requested to send their observations in form of a note or regular article.

ARTICLES

A VISIT TO HINGOLGADH: by Bakul N Trivedi, 19/414, Satyagrah Chhavani, Satellite Road, Ahmedabad - 380 015.

I visited Hingolgadh during 15-16th of August 2003. Because of good rains it was all green around. All small ponds and check dams in this area were almost full, if not overflowing.

I was in look out for Whitebellied Minivet but could not find one. It was disappointing. Small Minivet were seen occasionally but not in groups as I am used to see them elsewhere, routinely. Another bird I was specifically interested in was, Marshall's Iora. I could spot it every time we went out for birding. It was quite satisfactory. Discrete black cap of the male is quite characteristic. Marshall's Iora is distinguishable from Common Iora not only by its plumage but also by its call.

The whole area is ruled by Redvented Bulbuls. There was no place or time you do not see them. I occasionally spotted Common and Jungle Babblers. Little Brown Doves were in plenty, while Ringed Dove I heard once or twice. Other two varieties of doves were not seen. Common Mynas were seen near the fort. Brahminy Mynas too were seen occasionally. We could spot a small flock of Rosy Pastors in flight.

Fort has a small colony of House Swifts. Some 15 – 20 birds were seen in flight, circling over the fort, almost throughout the day. In spite of my best efforts, I could hardly make out them feeding insects in flight. I saw a few Dusky Crag Martins also. I remembered Shri Lalsinhbhai having told me about late Sh. Shivraj Kumar Khacher who had shown him the Crag Martin at this fort, some 20 years back. It was told to me that Alpine Swift is seen here occasionally, but it was not to be this time.

While climbing on 'Zarukhas' of the fort, I also remembered Sh. Lavkumar having mentioned of a traditional nesting of Whitebacked Vulture on the roof of one of them in older times; the nest then was used by Laggar Falcon in later years (I am yet to confirm the year when this happened). Hardly any prey birds today. I spotted one Honey Buzzard in flight. When we were at 'Bhimkui', some 2 km from the fort, one Blackwinged Kite was spotted hovering over Juna Dungar. In a stretch of 7 km between Vinchhiya and Hingolghadh, we counted 4 Blackwinged Kites. But that is all for prey birds. No vultures, no kites.

Roseringed Parakeets seemed to have occupied holes on the eastern face of the fort. Some 4-5 birds were regularly seen in that area. We saw 3 active nests of House Sparrow in the fort. Especially interesting was a pair taking interest in an old nest in Ravan tree (wild Jamun) within the fort premises. I thought initially, that birds must be taking away twigs from the nest for their use elsewhere, but at times they seemed to be rearranging some of the twigs within the nest.

In addition to Franklin's Wren-warbler, I also saw an actively moving Ashy Wren Warbler in its full plumage. I saw a Rufousfronted Wren-warbler so closely for the first time in my life. Rufous on the forehead was quite diagnostic. It was actively foraging in small bush, spending more time on the ground.

Redwinged Bush Lark was another bird I enjoyed watching as it would fly up and then descend down gradually like a parachute spreading its wings. Though the red on the wings was not very distinct in the available light situation, I distinguished it from the Singing Bush Lark by the pattern on its body. After referring the books, I was stunned and rather depressed to see the variety of larks and similarity amongst them! It is difficult to swear and say about their identity. I also noticed one Crested

Lark on our way to 'Bakhalvad' but could not identify which specific one was it!

At Bileshwar Mahadev Temple - about 2 km from Hingolghadh, some old Banyan, Ravan and Peepal trees have created a picturesque spot. Flowing water and check dams have contributed in its tropical transformation. The temple complex has grown significantly. I had a discussion with Sh. Asgarbhai about how such places of worship on one hand have demolished the natural habitat and preserved them in patches around them on the other hand. A few Lesser Whistling Teals and a pair of Comb Duck seemed to have been drawn to this check dam. Later in the daytime, this place was to be flocked by people, as there was a 'Mela'.

A fruit bearing picturesque Banyan tree in 'Bhimkui' - a preserved area of Motisari Jungle - some 2 km from the fort, had attracted about 50 Redvented Bulbuls, a few Brahminy Mynas and a solitary Crimsonbreasted Barbet.

There were some quails too which I am not good at identifying nor they are, in obliging you by revealing themselves fully for a longer period. But we identified Rock Bush Quail for sure from the call.

Going to 'Bakhalvad' at God's acre - a creation by Sh. Asgarbhai Jasdanwala was an experience and deserves a separate write up. An acre of Rain forest is created from a wasteland by Sh. Asgarbhai in the midst of grassland and shrub forest. Though we did not see one during our two days stay, it is said that here one can feed Tickell's Blue Flycatcher in the varandah. Adjoining Alansagar dam had received good waters in this season and so also a little pond in this farm. Some fully-grown Tamarind (AMLI) trees in the farm were home to about 200+ flying foxes. In fact a pair of Spotted Owlet, which had reared two chicks in a tree hole recently, greeted us to the farm. A good birdwatching place as it is, 'Bakhalwad's' visit is incomplete unless you know the man behind the show-Sh. Asgarbhai.

Fairly satisfied with the visit, we returned carrying along with, the enchanting memories of the fort, the shrub jungle, with beautifully shaped 'Gorads' and undulating landscape, with cool breeze creating waves in the grass stretched in front of us.

(Hingolghadh Nature Education Sanctuary popularly known, as 'Hingolghadh' is a shrub jungle spread out in about 6.2 km² area amongst hillocks near Jasdan, in Rajkot district.)

FIRST RECORD OF BREEDING OF GLOSSY IBIS *PLEGADIS FALCINELLUS* IN BHAVNAGAR: by I. R. Gadhvi¹ and V. B. Raol²

¹ : Zoology Dept, Sir P.P. Institute of Science, Bhavnagar - 364 002, ² "Aishwarya", Hill Drive, Bhavnagar - 364 002.

Glossy ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* is found during monsoon and winter in the marshlands around Bhavnagar. Dharmakumarsinhji (1955) describes it as a rare in Saurashtra. Salim Ali (1956) mentioned the status of this ibis as uncertain. But, in the present years the population of the Glossy Ibis has been strikingly increased. Vikas Trivedi (pers. comm.) observed a flock of about 125 Glossy Ibis in a marshland in Kumbharvada-Nari Road area in Bhavnagar during August 2003.

Good monsoon in the present year has created a very favourable situation in the Krishnakunj Lake in the Victoria Park, Bhavnagar. The area of the lake is about 8-9 ha within the 250 ha reserved forest of Victoria Park. The lake is flooded and the *Prosopis chilensis* shrubs in the water has provided safe nesting site for the waders like ibis, herons, egrets, cormorants, darters etc. One of us (VBR) has been monitoring the colony since July 2003 onwards. In the fourth week of July 5-6 pairs of Glossy Ibis started nesting in the mixed heronry. Video film of the nesting activity was also recorded. Surprisingly in the first week of August the glossy ibis left the site and shifted to the interior part of the heronry, which could not be monitored, from the shore. The movement of a flock of 25-30 glossy ibis around the heronry revealed the subsistence of nesting activity of the ibis. On 24th August, Dr. Parasharya, Vikas and Dishant recorded a few Glossy Ibises entering in the heronry at 10:00 hrs. The position of nests of Glossy Ibis was not visible from the margin of the lake because of the thick mesh of *Prosopis*. A boat was made available on 12th Sept. and we visited the heronry at 07:30 hrs. We spent 3 hrs in the boat and closely observed the heronry. With our surprise, we counted seven nestlings of Glossy Ibis from three nests. The nestlings were still having rose coloured bill with black band in middle. We took the movie as well as pictures of the parent birds feeding their nestlings. A glossy ibis was also seen incubating in the nest. All the nests were 1-2 m above the water level.

It is probably the first record of breeding of Glossy Ibis in Bhavnagar. Table 1 shows the approximate number of nests of each species in the colony at Krishnakunj Lake.

References:

- Ali, S., (1956). *The Birds of Gujarat*. Gujarat Research Society, Bombay
Dharmakumarsinhji, R. S. (1955). *Birds of Saurashtra*. Times of India Press, Bombay.

Table1. Nests number of waterbirds in Krishnakunj Lake heronry at, Victoria Park Bhavnagar in September 2003.

Species	No. of Nest
Cattle Egret (<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>)	1500-1600
Little Egret (<i>Egretta garzetta</i>)	800-900
Night Heron (<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>)	1200-1500
Pond Heron (<i>Ardeola grayii</i>)	30-40
White Ibis (<i>Threskiornis melanocephalus</i>)	700-800
Little Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax niger</i>)	1200-1500
Indian Shag (<i>Phalacrocorax fuscicollis</i>)	13-14
Greater Cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)	08-10
Darter (<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>)	04
Glossy Ibis (<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>)	04

SIGHTINGS OF MASKED BOOBY *SULA DACTYLATRA* AT MITHAPUR - FIRST RECORD FOR GUJARAT: by Satish H. Trivedi, Amateur Rangers Nature Club, E-1, New Merchant Colony, Mithapur - 361 345.



Mithapur is located 20 km north of the holy city of Dwarka (22° 14' N, 69° 01' E) in the Jamnagar District of Gujarat. The Dwarka tahsil is a peninsula surrounded by the Arabian Sea on the west and north and the Gulf of Kachchh on the east. Aquatic birds visit this place in hordes, particularly during the winter season as the Dwarka tahsil has a long coastline with tidal mudflats and a number of wetlands. Many a times one also gets to see birds which are not common to this region.

The Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*, which is never reported earlier from Gujarat state, has been sighted a number of times in and around Mithapur during 1988 to 1994. However, since then there have been no reports of this bird. Details of the records are given below.

9th August 1987: A dead Masked Booby was found on Mithapur beach. The lower mandible of the beak had cracks on either side with traces of blood. The body had two puncture marks (could be of canine teeth of some predator) with fresh bloodstains. Jackals, fox, hyena and dogs are common here. The shine in the eyes was prominent indicating that the bird must have died just a few minutes ago. Live ticks were seen below the feathers on the breast region.

Mithapur had experienced cyclonic turbulence and gusty winds the previous two days. The Booby could perhaps have been blown off course and swept by the gusty winds to the Mithapur coast. This exhausted / sick bird, probably had been killed by some predator. The dead bird was photographed and the news was given coverage by the local dailies.

28th July 1988: A fisherman at Mithapur seacoast recovered a dead bird on 28th July 1988. Heavy rains and strong winds lashed the Mithapur region the previous day as also the day on which the dead bird was recovered. The dead bird was photographed.

17th July 1989: Two Masked Boobies were sighted flying over the Sagar seawater intake ponds at Mithapur at 7:07 PM.

21st September 1990: Three Masked Boobies were sighted at the Sagar seawater intake ponds at Mithapur at 6:12 PM.

4th August 1993: A sick Masked Booby was recovered near the Sagar seawater intake ponds in the evening. The bird seemed to be very weak and did feed on the fish offered to it. It died at 1:50 PM on the following

day i.e. 5th August 1993. The bird was photographed.

11th July 1994: A sick Masked Booby was recovered from the Sagar seawater intake ponds by a fisherman. The bird seemed to be very weak. However, it started feeding fish from the next day onwards and recovered fully within a week. This bird was released on 18th July 1994 at the Sagar seawater intake pond.

All the sightings are during southwest monsoon period i.e. July to September. Heavy cyclonic rains preceded Sightings/ records of the booby.

Although there have been reports of Masked Booby sightings on the west coast (Kerala and Udupi region), there hardly seems to be any sightings recorded north of the Bombay coast in India (Grimmett *et al.* 1998 and Kazmierczak 2000). However, on Pakistan coast it is recorded as erratic or occasional on Makran coastal waters (Kazmierczak 2000). Mithapur coast is very close (< 100 km) to this area.

This is the first record of the Masked Booby from Gujarat coast. A regular watch on our seacoast is urgently needed to record presence/ occurrence of such oceanic birds.

References:

Grimmett, R., C. Inskipp & T. Inskipp (1998): Birds of the Indian Subcontinent. Oxford University Press, Delhi.

Kazmierczak, K. (2000): A Field Guide to the Birds of India. Om Book Service, New Delhi

BLUEFOOTED BOOBY ON MAHUVA COAST: A FIRST RECORD FOR THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT: by Ruchi Dave, Pravinsinh Dodiya and Jaidev Dhadhal, Mahuva.

While bird watching on coastal areas near Pingaleshwar, 8 km far from Mahuva, Chirag Kotadiya, Bhavesh Bhalodiya, Bharat Solanki, Sandip Vaghela, Naimish Trivedi and Harish Vishnukarma, members of Flamingo Nature Club, Mahuva found a bird, which died next day as it was very sick and unable to fly. By referring the Hamlyn Photographic Guide to Birds of the World, we found that the bird was Blue-footed Booby (*Sula nebouxii*), which is a Neotropical bird. It has never been recorded in India before. The body of this bird has been sent to specimen department, BNHS.

The bird was found on 3rd July 2003. Mr. Zafar-ul-

Islam from BNHS has confirmed that the bird is Blue-footed Booby (*Sula nebouxi*). Yes, this specie has been never recorded in Indian Subcontinent before.

There are doubts that Masked Booby, Brown Booby and Red-footed Booby breeds on Lakshadweep and Maldives. Anyway, Blue-footed Booby found on our coast is something worth to take note of and we must watch our coasts more carefully and regularly with hope to find more birds of the family.

FLAMINGO IN GUJARAT DURING 10-26 JANUARY 2003: by Anika Jadhav and B. M. Parasharya, AINP on Agricultural Ornithology, Gujarat Agricultural University, Anand 388 110.

Following table is an account of the flamingos counted by us on the known and accessible sites during January. We counted 28,333 Greater Flamingo and 369,901

Lesser Flamingos making a total of 398,234 flamingos. This is the largest figure of flamingo count in India. Adding the number of flamingos counted by the participants of AWC 2003 in January 2003, total count of Greater Flamingos was 33,033 and that of Lesser Flamingos was 375,778. All together 408,811 flamingos were counted. Major concentration of Lesser Flamingo was in Gulf of Khambhat whereas the Greater Flamingos were uniformly distributed on the coastal wetlands. We can still refine this count, as several other important sites could not be covered due to several reasons.

Shri P. D. Chavda provided assistance all throughout the field surveys. Sh. Bharat Rughani, Sh. Satish Trivedi, Dr. K. L. Mathew, Sh. Jummabhai Moria, Vikas Trivedi, Dishant Parasharya, Dr. I. R. Gadhavi, Raju Chauhan, N. A. Thakor, and several other friends accompanied us in the field and provided local hospitality.

Table 1.

Distribution of flamingos in coastal and inland wetlands of Gujarat during 10-26 January 2003.

Wetlands	Number of		
	Greater Flamingo	Lesser Flamingo	Total Flamingos
(A) Coastal	28,217	369,901	398,118
a) Gulf of Kachchh	10,756	31,381	42,137
b) Gulf of Khambhat	8,298	297,366	305,664
c) Other coastal sites	9,163	41,154	50,317
(B) Inland fresh water	116	0	116
Subtotal	28,333	369,901	398,234
Count by AWC counters	4,700	5,877	10,577
Grand Total	33,033	375,778	408,811



FLAMINGOS COUNT BY THE PARTICIPANTS OF AWC IN JANUARY 2003

No	District/ Sites	Counters	Date	Greater	Lesser	Total
	Vadodara					
1	Muval	G. S. Padate, R. V. Devkar, Pratyush	15	5	0	5
	Surat					
1	Onjal	Surat Nature Club	23	15	25	40
	Bhavnagar					
1	Ghogha-Haathab	Vikas Trivedi	10	0	110	110
2	Odarka	Vikas Trivedi, D. P. Parasharya	13	70	0	70
3	Kareda	Vikas Trivedi, D. P. Parasharya	13	10	0	10
4	Avaniya saltans	Vikas Trivedi, D. P. Parasharya	9	61	0	61
6	Bhandhara, (Nikol)	Jaidev Dhadhal, P. P. Dodia	19	300	1200	1500
	Junagadh					
1	Kaj wetland	I. R. Gadhavi	12	2000	250	2250
	Kachchh					
1	Vijay sagar reservior		6	2	0	2
2	Hamirsar tank	Subodh Hathi	5	1	0	1
3	Bhadreshwar creek	Trilochan Chhaya	12	35	74	109
4	Nakti creek	S. N. Varu,	12	800	1000	1800
5	Rudramata dam	S. N. Varu,	14	72	0	72
6	Rukmavati creek	Ashwin Pomal	19	16	0	16
7	Ratnal Creek dam	Pratap Sevak	12	2	0	2
	Rajkot					
1	Nyari-I	Parsottam Patel, Firoz Engineer	14	39	0	39
3	Fad Dang Beti	H. L. Chauhan, Pradeep Sojitra	12	31	0	31
	Sabarkantha					
1	Limbhoi	B.N. Trivedi, U. Vora, Niraj Joshi,				
		Vipula Goswami	12	1	0	1
	Surendranagar					
1	Dholidhaja Dam	Faruk Chauhan, Chiku Vora, Yogendra, Mahavirsinh	18	0	13	13
2	Nayaka dam (Muli)	Yogendra, Chiku Vora, Faruk Chauhan, Mahavir	12	70	100	170
3	Nava Talav	Shabbir Malik,	25	100	3000	3100
	Amareli					
1	Jafrabad Kharapat	Gautam Joshi	14	500	50	550
2	Jafrabad salt pans	Gautam Joshi	14	105	55	160
	Navsari					
1	Nani Kakarad	Piyush Patel, Jat Mohammat	12	355	0	355
	Ahmedabad					
1	Vasana Sewage	Dr. Peter	12	93	0	93
2	Jetapur village pond	Patel Jayprakash, Dave Jignesh	23	4	0	4
	Mehsana					
1	Thol Bird Sanctuary	Patel J. P., Vaidya Bhavesh,	19	13	0	13
	Total			4700	5877	10577

Records of Mallards

No.	District/ Sites	Counters	Date	Number
Vadodara				
1	Timbi	Rohit Vyas, Anil Gohil,		
		Suvarna Sonavane, D. A. Shaikh	9/2/03	7
2	Wadhavana	G. S. Padate	26/1/03	16
3	Jamli	Ami, Jayesh Bhatt, Kalpesh Anjaria	2/2/03	2
Ahmedabad				
1	AEC Ash Pond	Uday Vora	23/1/03	4
Gandhinagar				
1	GEB Ash Pond	Uday Vora	9/2/03	6
Surat				
1	Onjal	Surat Nature Club	23/1/03	3
Bhavnagar				
1	Kareda lake	Darshan Andheria	25/1/03	5
2	Bhandhara, (Nikol)	Jaydev Dhadhal, P. P. Dodia	19/1/03	10
Dahod				
1	Dahod		2/2/03	2
Kachchh				
1	Lair reservoir	Trilochan Chhaya	28/12/02	1
2	Don village tank	S. N. Varu	19/1/03	9
Rajkot				
1	Nyari-I	Bhavesh Trivedi, Purshotam Patel, Firoz Engineer	14/1/03	2
2	Aji II	Tushar Sanghani, Dilip Joshi, Kanubhai Suthar	19/1/03	1
Sabarkantha				
	Hathmati dam	Uday Vora	22/1/03	40
1	Varaj dam	A. M. Patel, Mayur Mistri, I. A. Kumpavat	29/1/03	19
Bansakantha				
	Dantiwada dam	Uday Vora	12/2/03	4+
Navsari				
1	Nani Kakarad	Piyush Patel, Jat Mohammad	12/1/03	2
Jamnagar				
1	Lakhota lake	K.L. Mathew, Suresh Bhatt,		
		Keyur, Jay,	11/2/03	2
Kheda				
	Pariej	Uday Vora	7/2/03	6
Anand				
1	Lambhvel sewage	B. M. Parasharya, Anika Jadhav	20/1/03	4
Porbandar				
1	Meedha Creek	Anika Jadhav, B. M. Parasharya, Bharat Rughani	12/1/03	20
2	Vanana to Gosa	Anika Jadhav, B. M. Parasharya, Bharat Rughani	12/1/03	4
TOTAL				169

NOTES

NOTE FROM VELAVADAR: by Dishant Parasharya, Vikas Trivedi and Dishith Mehta, Bhavnagar.

We visited Velavadar National park on 23-03-03 with Dr. L. R. Gadhavi and Sh. Vijay Rathod (R.F.O.). In the evening we spotted a Lesser Florican, 15 harriers (most of them were Marsh Harrier and Montague's Harrier) and a Shorteared Owl.

SUMMER COUNT ON WETLANDS AROUND BHAVNAGAR: by Vikas Trivedi and Dishant Parasharya, Bhavnagar.

Gaurishankar Lake (Bortalav), 24-05-03, 0630hrs: White-necked Stork - 1, Little Cormorant and Indian Shag 300, Spot-billed Duck 15, Little Grebe 20, Coot - 40, Greater Flamingo-20.

Kumbharwada sewage and saltpans, 24-05-03, 0815 hrs: Lesser Flamingo-8200, Sub-adults of Lesser Flamingo-180, Spot-billed Duck-35, egrets - 48

Freshwater pond of Ruva on Newport Road, 27-05-03, 0645 hrs: Spot-billed Duck- 6, Young ones of Spot-billed Duck-11, Northern Shoveller-1, Spoonbill-7, Little Cormorant-5, Indian Shag-35, Night Heron-1, Whiskered Tern-50.

BREEDING OF LONG-BILLED VULTURE IN KACHCHH: by Shantilal Varu and Ashwin Pomal, Bhuj.

While birdwatching at Edmond Lake (about 8 km west of Bhuj city) on 13-04-2003 we saw one Long-billed Vulture *Gyps indicus* in low flight near one cliff. We thought that there must be nesting of this bird. When we reached near the cliff, we saw a nest with an adult bird sitting in. One chick was moving in the nest. The nest was at about 40 feet above the ground and a few years before Bonelli's Hawk Eagle used the same nest.

When we reached near second part of the cliff near dam, where 4 more nests were seen with an adult bird sitting inside. Three nests had a single chick whereas in the fourth nest, probably the adult was incubating an egg. One additional nest was located on 22-04-03 on the same cliff and an adult was sitting inside. On 26-04-03, total six nests were seen, each one with a chick. Total 9 adults were seen around this colony. It seems that this species is now recovering which is a good sign.

NOTE FROM KACHCHH: by Ashwin Pomal and Shantilal Varu, Bhuj

Today (31-08-03) we (friends) visited Chhari Dhandh (morning time). Near Kiro hill in a wetland, we saw a nesting colony. Details of the species nesting is as follows:

Cattle Egret-100+ nests with 2/3 chicks per nest; Spoonbill - 20+ nests (incubation stage); Night Heron - 5+ nests; White Ibis - 5+ nests; Glossy Ibis - 1 nest with 1 chick; Purple Heron-1 nest; Painted Stork -1nest, total 12 adult storks; Little Cormorant - 50+ nests.

Near the Chhari village, on Dharka wetland we saw 200+ River Tern. In the evening time we were going to Vekariya Dhandh where we saw 20 nests (under incubation) of Blackwinged Stilt at the edge of roadside. Out of 7 Ruff and Reeves seen one was white form.

DEATH OF A SARUS CRANE DUE TO KITE THREAD: by Gaurav Pandya and Snehal Patel, Veterinary College, Anand.

On 13 January 2003, a farmer and RFO of Matar tahsil came to our college along with an injured Sarus Crane. There were several injuries on its right wing. When they reached here, excess blood had flown out and as a result the bird could not be saved. On inquiry, the farmer revealed that when the crane was in flight it got entangled in the kite thread due to which the wing was injured and the crane got grounded. Kite flying around Makarsankranti (14th January) is taking toll of several endangered birds.

REDCRESTED POCHARD: SIGHTINGS DURING AWC 2003:

1. We saw Red Crested Pochard on 19/1/2003 at Don village tank near Mandvi, about 15 km west north. A good photograph is taken. **Ashwin Pomal, Bhuj.**
2. Two males at Pariej reservoir (Kheda district) in January 2003. The birds were too far for photography. **R. B. Balar, Ahmedabad**

STANDARDIZED ENGLISH AND SCIENTIFIC NAMES OF THE BIRDS OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT-2002: The 'Book of Indian Birds' and 'Pictorial Guide to the Birds of Indian Subcontinent', by Salim Ali were the only field guides for the birdwatchers in India and so we were familiar with the common English names and scientific names given in the same. In 1996, Oriental Bird Club (UK) came out with

their *Annotated Checklist* (Inskipp *et al.* 1996), Grimmett, Inskipp and Inskipp with 'Birds of the Indian Subcontinent' in 1998 and Kazmierczak with his 'Field Guide' in 2000. All these books had new English names (and scientific names too) with which Indian birdwatchers were totally unfamiliar. In view of this, the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) decided to bring out a standardized list of English bird names that could be used by Indian birdwatchers and institutions. The ENVIS center at BNHS was given this task and Ranjit Manakadan set about it in such a way that, ornithologists and birdwatchers across India were consulted before the names were finalized. Aasheesh Pittie of Birdwatchers Society of Andhra Pradesh (BSAP) added the complete scientific binomials to these names, realizing that this was an opportunity to put together a slim and portable checklist of the birds of the Indian Subcontinent. This list was first published in 'Buceros' the newsletter of the ENVIS Centre of BNHS (Manakadan and Pittie, 2001). For a wider circulation of this revised nomenclature and its popularization, 'Newsletter for Birdwatchers' have published the entire checklist in special issue of May – June 2002. We all have to adopt a new nomenclature to avoid further confusion about nomenclature. To maintain harmony with the other organizations, BCSG has decided to accept the new nomenclature and use it in its newsletter. Members are requested to refer to the Newsletter for Birdwatchers Vol. 42, issue no. 3 of May-June 2002. Those members who do not have access to it, can have a xerox copy of the same on request (the cost of xeroxing and postage to be born by the members).

BCSG REPORTING

LAVKUMAR KHACHER TO BE HONOURED AT BNHS: President of BCSG, Shri Lavkumar will be honoured with 'Excellence in Ornithology' by BNHS on 12th November 2003. Society on behalf of EC and all members congratulates him on his achievement.

BCSG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE EXPANDED:

To execute the objectives of the society in a better way and to make a true state level body, we have expanded our existing executive committee. The new members co-opted in the committee are: 1. Dr. Geeta Padate, Vadodara, 2. Dr. Indra Gadhavi Bhavnagar, 3. Bharat Rughani, Porbandar, 4. Ajay Desai, Dahod, 5. Mayur Mistri, Vijaynagar, 6. Dr. Piyush H. Patel, Valasad, 7.

Prof. V. C. Soni, Rajkot, 8. Ashok Mashru, Rajkot, 9. Dr. Raju Desai, Navsari, 10. Shri Mukesh Bhatt, Surat, 11. Shri Niraj Joshi, Ahmedabad, 12. Ms. Ila Vora, Gandhinagar, 13. Dr. D. N. Rank, Anand.

Our treasurer, Dr. C. K. Borad has resigned from his post as he has gone to Israel on post doctorate fellowship in June 2003. Now, Dr. D. N. Rank of Anand will hold the responsibility as treasurer.

FIELD PROGRAMMES:

Annual Camp at Dangs: We will have our first field camp at Dang 27-30 October 2003, exclusively for the members of 'Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat (BCSG). This is the first general field programme for the members of the society. We expect a large participation. Contact: Shri Snehal Patel, 81, Sarjan Society, Athwalines, Surat- 395 007. Phone: 0261-2227596.

Harrier Count at Velavadar National Park, November 2003: A collaborative harrier census programme is arranged at VNP on 22nd and 23rd November 2003. For other detail please contact Dr. Indra Gadhavi on Phone: 0278 – 2565686.

Details of the field programme are already dispatched under separate post to the members.

NESTING OF CASPIAN TERN AT

CHARAKLA SALTPANS: The staff of the Marine National Park, Jamnagar reported nesting Caspian Tern in July 2003 on one small island within the salt pans of Charakla, Mithapur. About 400 pairs nested during July and August 2003. This is the largest number ever recorded in our territory and third record of breeding in Indian Territory. Earlier two records were from the Little Rann of Kachchh. Shri Satish Trivedi of Mithapur has sent several photographs of various nesting stages and also sent other details through e-mails. However, we are waiting for detailed write up from him and friends from the forest department who recorded detailed observations.

LETTER TO THE EDITORS

1. The waterbird count forms have been received and we made a start with the small water bodies near Bhuj on the 11th January. Varu and others went to the Kandla Port area yesterday where in the salt pans they counted a good number of both the flamingos. You have rightly mentioned the gathering of information on the population size of these birds.

According to the estimate of Dr. Taej Mundkur there were about 25000-30000 Lesser Flamingo present on the Gujarat coast and to my mind this figure is more or less correct. Their original breeding area was in the Surajbari creek but it was abandoned after the development of prawn fishing and saltworks. Next time when they breed in the Little Rann of Kutch, an attempt should be made to ring the young ones. As far as Greater Flamingo are concerned, they disperse so far and wide, it would not be possible to reach any satisfactory estimate. Ringing their young ones also in the Great Rann could provide very interesting data on their overall movement about which so little is known. **M. K. Himmatsinhji, Bhuj.**

2. Thanks for sending me copies of FLAMINGO. Its a wonderful effort and fulfills a long-felt need. I wish you and your team all the best for it. I will be sending you my life membership in a couple of days.

I request you to kindly put the BSAP on your mailing list on an exchange basis for our PITTA. A line in confirmation would be greatly appreciated so I can make the necessary addition to our mailing list. **Aasheesh Pittie, BSAP, P.O. Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad - 500034.**

3. We have *Pitta* (Newsletter of the Birdwatchers Society of Andhra Pradesh), *Blackbuck* (of the Madras Naturalist Society), *Hornbill* of the BNHS, *Sansad News* from West Bengal, to name just a few and now we have '*Flamingo*' (Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat) and fresh from the oven, North Karnataka Birders' Network. This is a happy development, because activities at the LOCAL level, where we can see, and monitor the landscape from day to day that is likely to be of lasting value. Already the members of '*Flamingo*' in association with SACON, have organized a training workshop on 'Inland Wetlands of Gujarat'. **Zafar Futehally, Editor- Newsletter for Birdwatchers, In: Editorial NLBW 43(4): 46, 2003.**
4. One year's incubation must be a record. Anyway, it is very nice to receive society's newsletter. I hope that now onwards the '*Flamingo*' will migrate regularly to the members.

With due respect to Anika, the figure of 3850 Glossy Ibis (*Flamingo* 1(1): 3-4, 2003 on one pond only seems somehow indigestible. It must be checked

with the data collected by the bird counts done so far. We all must be very careful with this number game - **Jaydev Dhadhal, Mahuva.**

(Anika and myself are monitoring bird number on Lambhvel sewage pond every month since June 2002. I was also involved in count of Glossy Ibis and other birds, which Anika has reported. The figure is actually a minimum estimate of number. Since the concentration was unusual, it was reported and the comparison was made with the count made in Gujarat and India during AWC. Unless a number game is played carefully and correctly, we cannot identify important bird areas nor we can do anything about the prevention of habitat destruction. - **B M Parasharya.**)

5. I've gone through '*Flamingo*'. I hope, from next issue we'll get some bits of information on one bird species or a location where beginner's can go for birdwatching. This is just my suggestion. **Kshitij Pandya, Ahmedabad**

RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON GUJARAT

1. Vyas, Raju 2002. Breeding of Oriental Pied Hornbill (*Anthrucoceros albirostris*) in captivity at Sayaji Baug Zoo, Vadodara, Gujarat. *Zoos' Print Journal* 17(9): 871-874.
2. Gadhavi, Indra, R. 2003. Monitoring nesting sites of Lesser Floricans (*Sypheotides indica*) in and around Blackbuck National Park, Gujarat. *Zoos' Print Journal* 18(7): 1135-1142.
3. Anika Jadhav and B. M. Parasharya 2003. Some observations on the nesting behaviour and food of the Spotted Owlet *Athene brama*. *Zoos' Print Journal* 18(8): 1163-1165.
4. Aeshita Mukherjee, C. K. Borad and B. M. Parasharya 2002. Comparative account of population and breeding pair density of the Indian Sarus Crane (*Grus antigone antigone*) in Kheda district, Gujarat. *Zoos' Print Journal* 17(8): 839-843.
5. Himmatsinhji, M. K. 2002. Observations on squatting posture adopted by *Chlamydotis undulata* (Jaquin). *JBNHS* 99(3): 522.
6. Patel Piyush 2002. Possible new record of *Sturnus malabaricus blythii* in Valsad district, Gujarat. *JBNHS* 99(3): 531.

7. Parasharya, B. M., S. N. Varu, C. K. Borad and Aeshita Mukherjee 2002. *Sturnus malabaricus blythii* in Gujarat state. JBNHS 99(3): 531-532.
8. Sanghani, Tushar M. 2003. Variations recorded in the iris, bill, leg and foot colouration in Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*. JBNHS 100(1): 109.
9. Urfi, Abdul Jamil 2003. Record of a nesting colony of Painted Stork *Mycteria leucocephala* at Man-Marodi Island in the Gulf of Kutch. JBNHS 100(1): 109-110.
10. Pati B. P. Sighting of the Lesser Florican *Sypheotides indica* in Gir interpretation zone, Devaliya, Gir Sanctuary. JBNHS 100(1): 122.
11. Aeshita Mukherjee, C. K. Borad and B. M. Parasharya 2003. Range extension of Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* in Gujarat. JBNHS 100(1): 135-136.
12. Parasharya, B. M. and Raju Vyas 2003. Status of Brown Rock Chat *Cercomela fusca* in Gujarat. Newsletter for Birdwatchers 43(3): 37-38.
13. Tiwari, J.K., Alain J. Crivelli and S. N. Varu 2003. Status and distribution of pelicans in Kutch district of Gujarat. Newsletter for Birdwatchers 43(3): 38.
14. Parasharya B.M., C. K. Borad and N. A. Thakor 2003. The Large Crested Tern and Eurasian Curlew at Dhuvaran, Gulf of Khambhat. Newsletter for Birdwatchers 43(3): 39-40.
15. Nirmala Snehal 2003. Indian Magpie Robin (*Copsychus saularis*). Newsletter for Birdwatchers 43(3): 43.

LETTER FROM LAVKUMARKHACHER

For some time now, Bakulbhai and through his writings in VIHANG, Himmatsinhji have urged me to write about recognition within groups of related birds. I appreciate the urgency they feel, and perhaps I could indeed make a very useful contribution. Notes on closely related birds have their value considerably enhanced if they are accompanied by good illustrations. In this, I have been greatly missing the ready talents of K. P. Jadav of Rajkot, but Bakulbhai, our dedicated honorary co-editor assured me that he could provide the line drawings. So, what is the hesitation to launch a useful series?

For quite a good many years, now I have stopped being an aggressive birder. I now enjoy the birds in my

immediate surroundings and frankly, I do not have the confidence to make quick identifications of the several groups of very similar looking species. There was a time I practiced identifying ducks flying overhead by their sound of wings, or tell apart the several small waders in mixed flocks by their rather distinguishing manner of walking, running or probing the mud. I recollect spending winter mornings separating the juvenile wagtails. The example was shown to me by two of the finest field birdwatchers, I have had the good fortune of having as mentors, when I was in my teens in distant 1940s-Uncle Bapa (Late Dharmakumarsinhji) and Horace Alexander. By the way a small bird flew out of a shrub, Bapasaheb would indicate whether the bird had a nest there or not and what excited me was his saying the bird had flown off eggs it was incubating or had just fed nestlings and was learning. His identification of birds of prey was legendary. Horace Alexander had the amazing ability to tell one Warbler from the other. To my delight, I realised even I was growing considerably adept with each field trip. The "blind identifications" came several years later. One was young and enthusiastic, birds were plentiful to practice on and above all, there were the "gurus" to impress.

Both Dharmakumarsinhji and Horace Alexander- and for that matter even Salim Ali never made any identification without prefacing it with "Probably...", "Looks to me to be...", "It seems to be...", or "I think it is...". At that time I used to wonder why these elders never had a definite recognition. But, with passage of time I started realizing the need for caution. My day was made when my first full paper on the birds of Gharwal was accepted immediately for the BNHS Journal in 1954, followed in quick succession by another on the birds of S.W. Tibet in which I added a new Redstart to the Tibet checklist of Salim Ali's. No queries were made!

By very regularly looking at our everyday birds, the ability to recognize certain very distinctive traits in each species increases. In addition, one very soon comes to recognise the habitat preferences of otherwise very similar looking species. In the world of the familiar, intrusion by a new comer is quickly noticed. The calls of very confusingly "look-alikes" are of considerable assistance in confirming identities. Getting familiar with birdcalls can vastly improve ones capabilities. Even the most mimetic of vocalization has sufficient nuances that are recognizable. I always have considered birds as audio-

visual organisms and I think instead of "birdwatching", we should use "bird familiarizing" to describe our hobby. It is when a birdwatcher develops a familiarity with bird vocalization that "blind identifications" become possible. At this stage one ceases to pursue birds in the manner of the continual mobile harriers and instead, sits quietly listening to sounds- rustling among leaf litter or a soft

contact call between a pair- as indeed would a Shikra or an Owl do. It must be kept in mind that birds have to keep in contact of others of their flock even as they need to remain unseen among dense foliage or by their cryptic colours. It is only the territorial males who flaunt their presences by displaying or singing from vantages points. (to be continued)

FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION ONLY

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